

Department of Justice High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project *San Diego, California*



Addressing Interoperability

The Department of Justice (DOJ) Wireless Management Office (WMO) is working to improve long-term federal interagency communications across the Nation. As an interim step, and as a response to a request from the House/Senate CJS Appropriations Subcommittee staff, the DOJ WMO has been leading the High-Risk Metropolitan Area Interoperability Assistance Project (“25 Cities”) to provide targeted cities with basic and immediate interagency communications capabilities among local, state, and federal agencies during emergency response. Twenty-five cities were selected using criteria that included perceived risk and population size. As stakeholders in 1 of the 25 cities, San Diego metropolitan area, local, state, and federal public safety agencies have been working collaboratively with the DOJ WMO to address basic interoperable communications.

Participating Agencies

Partnership among San Diego area local, state, and federal public safety agencies has been instrumental in the development of comprehensive interoperability solution sets. Participating agencies have included—

- City of San Diego Fire and Police Departments
- Drug Enforcement Administration
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Office of Inspector General
- Regional Communications System (RCS)
- San Diego County Sheriff's Department
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- U.S. Marshals Service
- U.S. Navy Public Safety Office

Key Successes

DOJ and area stakeholders successfully achieved basic interoperability and emergency response communications improvements in the San Diego metropolitan area through the implementation of three interoperability solutions. The solutions support the use of existing interoperability resources and disparate communications systems by extending coverage, capacity, and availability to more public safety agencies. Additionally, in the course of meeting this project's interoperability goals, stakeholders were able to leverage and expand the working relationships among local, state, and federal agencies to resolve interoperability issues for the area.

The first solution expands the number of agencies with access to the RCS, a joint radio system providing communications for more than 200 public safety agencies. This solution provides interagency communications via base interface module (BIM)-to-BIM connections routed over microwave circuits to link the consoles of three major public safety radio systems in the area. The connections between the RCS, City of San Diego, and the joint DOJ/Department of Homeland Security (DHS) radio systems provide direct interoperability among local, state, and federal public safety users of these radio systems during large-scale emergency responses.

The second solution extends coverage of two 800 megahertz (MHz) mutual-aid channels and provides new and extended coverage for two very high frequency (VHF) mutual-aid channels

used to support on-scene, interagency communications during major emergencies occurring in the metropolitan area. More specifically, the coverage area of the 800 MHz Fire Mutual Aid Radio System (FIREMARS) and the 800 MHz California Law Enforcement Mutual Aid System (CLEMARS) was expanded by adding 10 sites to the existing systems to provide more consistent coverage in the metropolitan area. In addition, the VHF National Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Radio System (NALEMARS) was implemented, and the coverage area of the VHF CLEMARS was extended by nine new sites. These extensions improve dedicated regional and national mutual-aid channels that users commonly turn to for interagency communications during major responses.

The third solution is the integration of eight 800 MHz control stations tied to the DOJ/DHS console system. This gives each console the ability to communicate and/or patch 58 800 MHz mutual aid trunked talkgroups within the RCS and City of San Diego Communications Systems as well as a county wide “Law CC” talkgroup that is used by all federal, state and local dispatch centers.

In support of these solutions, operational assistance was provided through the development of standard operating procedures (SOP) to ensure effective and sustained use of the interoperability solutions. To coordinate common operating procedures for the new interoperability solutions, DOJ worked with local, state, and federal agencies. This collaborative effort resulted in the development of a SOP to address rules of use for operating on mutual-aid channels. In addition, DOJ provided guidelines for agencies requesting, deploying, and operating mobile audio switches at an incident scene. Area stakeholders continue to meet to update these procedures and discuss interoperability efforts in the San Diego metropolitan area.

Moving Forward

The cooperation and support between participating agencies and DOJ WMO provided scalable solutions designed to give additional agencies access to the interoperability solutions. Sustained operations, maintenance, and support of these interoperability solutions will be coordinated by key stakeholders. These efforts, along with the area's long-term interoperability plans, will ensure continuity in addressing interoperable communications among public safety agencies in the San Diego metropolitan area.

Contact Information

If you would like to know more about this initiative or have questions, please contact—

RCS Connectivity / Mutual-Aid Channel Extension

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Standard Operating Procedures

Mutual-Aid Channels

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Mobile Audio Switch

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